

## **MARY, AGE 7**

**Non-Verbal Student Severe Disabilities & Autism**

**Cognitive Development – 18 months**

**Non-Symbolic Communicator**

**(no signs, words, picture recognition skills)**

**Screams, Hides Under Table**

**M**ary is a seven-year-old essentially non-verbal student with Autism. She does not recognize that pictures represent objects and people, and she does not recognize herself in pictures. Although she has said several words in the past, and infrequently will spontaneously echo a phrase from a favorite video, she does not yet use language to signify people, things or actions. Her estimated mental age is approximately eighteen months and her speech language pathologist has determined she is not ready for use of pictures and signify things she wants.

Mary enjoys adult interactions some of the time. She enjoys videos, moving a string back and forth and rocking. She has many repetitive and ritualistic behaviors, but will tolerate some interruption and redirection on many occasions, especially from favorite adults. Mary has learned to move from place to place by observing the naturally occurring cues in her environment (people moving, time of day, objects she sees.)

Mary is aware of routines to some extent, and highly upset if anticipated events do not occur. Once she is working on tasks, Mary tends to have less problem behavior than between tasks.

At home, Mary also runs away and hides to protest things she does not like, e.g., going on a car trip when she is watching a video. At school, Mary used to run out of the room last year, but this year has confined her running away to several tables in the room. Her protests are almost always during transitions, especially transitions to unexpected activities.